THE OGDEN STANDARD

SALLY PRUE ON THE GLAD SEA WAVES

BY ELISE WILLIAMSON.

"OH, Sally! Guess who's on board ship!"

"Aw, I can't guess, but I hope—it's the coroner. Aw-aw-awe!"

I lay flattened out like a shadow, with an ice cap perched over one eye and in my soul a limp desire to put away all earthly things. My conversation, if listened to steadily, would doubtless have proved monotonous, but nevertheless it was inspired by deep and true feeling.

"Aw-aw-awe!"

Dot paid no heed to my moanings. That healthy young heathen gazed at me with not the faintest sign of sympathy. In truth I thought that I perceived a light of unholy amusement lurking in her eyes.

"Sally! That ice cap! You look so queer!"

"Oh, it's funny, isn't it? Ha! ha! ha! ha!" But the javelins of my wrath were hurled in vain against an impenetrable shield of good humor.

"You just wait and see who's on board. I'll not waste good news on you in this upset state of mind."

"It's not my mind that's upset," I murmured weakly.

Dot departed laughing, and I essayed a feeble grin that came to an untimely end; for now the ship crouched upon the bottom of the sea and prepared for the record leap. I closed my eyes and waited. But she decided instead to conquer Pike's Peak by climbing in a smooth, sinuous, sliding, sickening movement.

When we had come somewhere in the neighborhood of Valhalla I began to wonder if the Valkürie maidens would hear me from there. True, I could boast of no illustrious deed in battle, but perhaps if I showed them my D. A. R. badge——! But just here we dropped lightly but firmly again to the bottom of the sea.

"Aw-aw-awe!"

Then my soul grew resolute within me. This was not to be endured. We were yet four days from New York. Here was I, who loved the sea with a great and real love, to whom the sound of the deep was as music of a mighty orchestra—a symphony of all emotion that spoke to the innermost heart of me. Here was I seasick—stowed away in a little airtight compartment with a silly ice cap on my head. I snatched off the offending article and sent it spinning across the stateroom, where it fell with a reproachful flop. I rang for the stewardess.

When she arrived I was clinging wildly to the port hole for air. But I was up!

"Aha! You think you will get up!" (I translate her tone of voice). "Perhaps, miss, you will have a cup of coffee and rolls, yes?"

"Not unless you chloroform me. I would like a salt bath, please."

Two hours later I appeared on deck, pale of face but triumphant. There was Dot standing by the rail, her eager little face all aglow, and beside her a six foot individual, the back view of whose broad shoulders seemed peculiarly familiar. Then he turned.

"Why, Ned Withers! I am glad to see you!"

Thereupon my two hands were seized in an enormous clasp and Ned's honest blue eyes were smiling into mine.

"Well, well, Sally! I thought you were a better sailor than this."

"Oh, I was only a bit indisposed," I declared airily.

"That's what they all say when they get up on deck."

Ned laughed. It was good to hear him. There was something so thoroughly real about it.

Long ago, in the pinafore days, Ned had been my first sweetheart. He had carried my books to school and when occasion arose had fought and bled for me. And oh, true test of a loyal heart! he had permitted that I go with him fishing and carry the tackle. Indeed, once he had imprinted an indefinite kiss upon the side of my nose with the thrilling declaration that when he got to be an army officer I could marry him.

But fate, in the person of Ned's guardian, a rich old gouty uncle, nipped our romance in the bud by packing off Master Ned, along with a tutor—the nucleus of a hundred-year-old library—and a goodly part of the family silver, to a ranch in Colorado, where, he declared, if the lad intended to spread and grow he would have ample room.

Noblesse Oblige.

I have no doubt but that the tutor was benefited by the climate, and uncle, being a book lover, found joy in the library, while Ned seized the opportunity to spread and grow. Physically he was a joy to behold. There was a look of quiet power in his face that one acknowledged and respected. He possessed that most rare quality, real dignity, and the repose that comes from a calm spirit within.

As to his intellectual status, Ned's own opinion is worthy of quotation. Having been born a gentleman, he recognized the power of noblesse oblige and had acquired such an education as befitted a gentleman, no more, no less. But for his own personal taste he preferred growing things to books.

So it had happened that when Ned was yet in his teens Uncle died suddenly, leaving to his nephew all personal effects, the Colorado ranch, along with mining interests in Nevada and two plantations in the Mississippi Delta.

Fate thus wove the net of circumstance close about him. The boyish dream of the army was put aside and Ned set about becoming a man of affairs.

All of this Ned had told me one night at a dance, six years before, when we were both in Fayettesville. I had not seen him since until to-day.

Dot now suggested that we walk around the deck. But somehow the idea did not appeal to me.

Ned looked at me keenly.

"Maybe, Sally, since you have been feeling—er—indisposed, you had better try this steamer chair."

I gave him a look of lofty scorn, but accepted the chair. He tucked me in comfortably, found several magazines and then went off with Dot, while I watched the crowd.

There was the usual wind blown maiden with straight locks that caroused in the breeze—not exactly the charming effect that one observes in the nautical poster girl of the magazine covers.

There was the omnipresent trio that strolled incessantly. The father, who had every outline of a telegraph pole and a bald head fringed about the ears and protected by a golf cap. The mother, equally as perpendicular, wearing also a golf cap, which was tied on with a brown veil, and by her side marched Augustus Alexandre, the prodigy offspring, in knee breeches and cute little flat bows on the sides. A straw hat, man's size to fit his head and secured against the wind by a black cord guard fastened to the lapel of his coat. He also wore glasses.

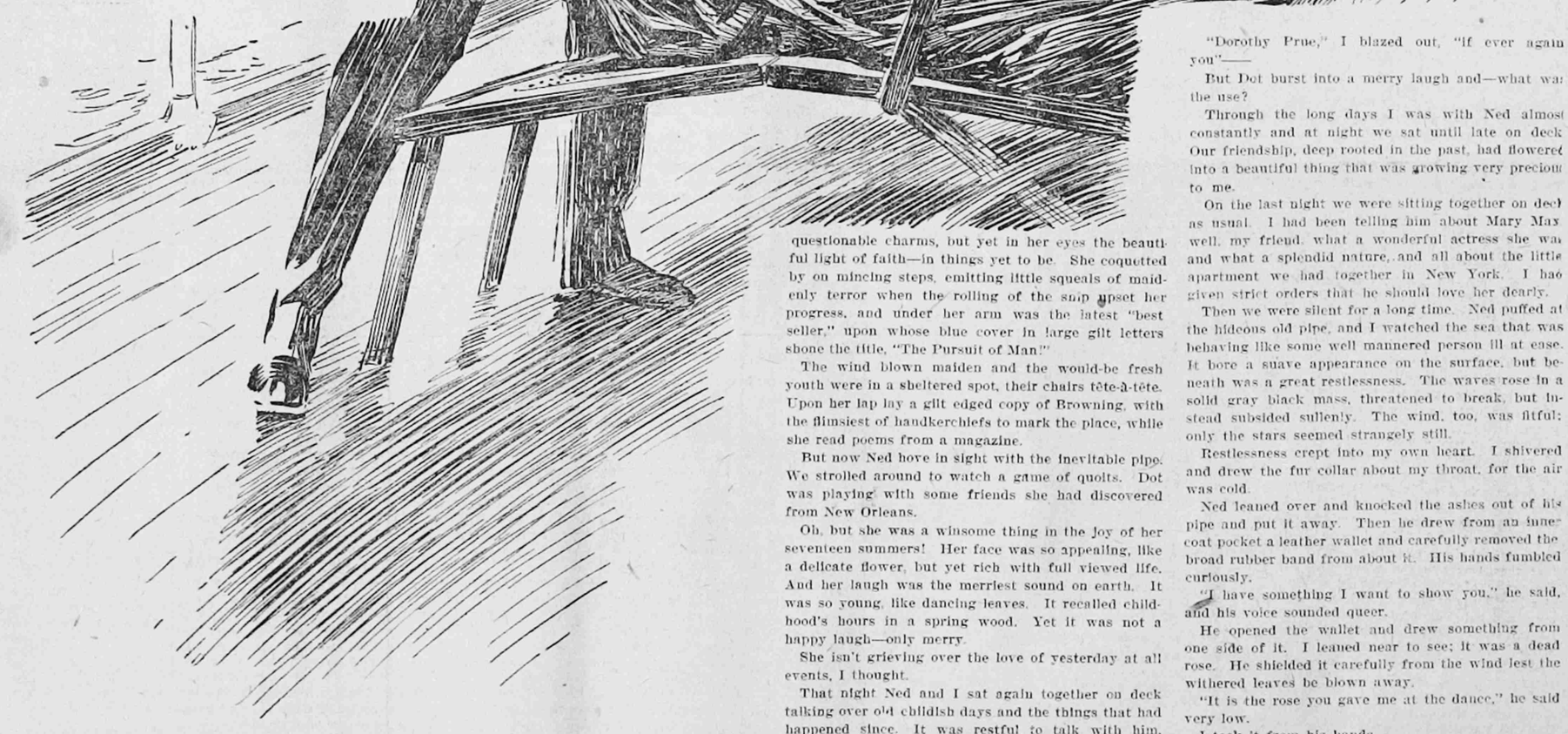
Why this trio is omnipresent is not known to me, but no ocean voyage is complete without one.

There was the would-be fresh youth, who leaned with careless grace against the rail in view of the wind blown maiden.

And now Dot and Ned came tramping by. I must say for a person who had wept two nights and a day over parting with a love sick youth at home Miss Dot looked excessively cheerful. I patted myself on the head for a wise one.

Just at this moment a man in a Norfolk suit bore down upon the party next me with his face full of glad tidings.

"Say, old Horace is bowled over; knocked out clean!"



"He Tucked Me In Comfortably"

"No?" cried one of the party, grinning cheerfully.

"Sure as you're alive!"

I caught myself grinning too. What is it that on shipboard causes one to take such fiendish glee in a fellow passenger's misery? Ask any victim of seasickness—is it a joke?

The fresh youth gave the alarm that a school of flying fish were near. Every one rushed to behold them. Just then the gong sounded for luncheon, but I preferred to stay and watch the fish—I don't care. They were pretty little things, these butterflies of the sea. And I know that on moonlight nights some old mer-bugologist takes his seaweed net and goes chasing them.

After luncheon Dot reported that the salon looked like the flower garden at home after a heavy rain.

I lay all afternoon reading and dozing and looking at the sea. Toward evening I felt like maybe the struggle to live was worth while after all.

I watched the wild splendor of the semi-tropic sunset burn the heavens and the sea. Red gold, it was, and purple that shaded into palest lavender; delicate shell pink that deepened into rich scarlet shot through with long streaks of Nile green—a molten mass of marvellous glory that dimmed at last to twilight and the dark.

Then the stars came out softly, and all about was the quiet night and the sea, with our little ship that cut through it intent only on its way.

I started at a touch upon my arm. It was Ned. He had ordered the deck steward to bring me a bottle of champagne.

"It is what you need, Sally. Drink a little."

I did drink a little and felt better.

Dot had retired because she liked to be up for the sunrise, but Ned sat with me on deck for ever so long—sometimes talking, but more often in silence. I watched him smoke the ugliest big bowled pipe.

"It does not seem like six years since I saw you at that dance in Fayettesville," he said suddenly.

"But it has been six years. Do you remember the little lake, Ned; how pretty it looked in the moonlight with the water lilies in bloom upon it? And you reached one for me and came near to tumbling in."

"But I got it. And you gave me one of the red roses you wore in exchange for it."

"Why, yes—so I did."

"I have never forgotten."

We drifted into silence. The wind made my eyes heavy. The rhythmic sound of the sea was like a lullaby. I saw, sleepily, the light in the big bowled pipe flare up and grow dim and flare again.

When I awoke I sat up with a start. I felt that it was late. The deck was deserted, except for Ned there beside me puffing away at the ugly old pipe, just as I had left him.

"Why, Ned!" I cried reproachfully. "You let me sleep—for how long?"

"Oh! Maybe an hour," he said. "It was good for you. To-morrow you will be feeling awfully fit."

"Yes, I think I shall, Ned. It was good of you to sit here with me."

"I loved to do it," he said simply. He helped me to my feet and piloted me to my stateroom door.

"I shall expect to see you at breakfast in the morning," he teased.

"And you shall, young man."

And he did. I had never felt better in my life. I began to think that perhaps I had been only indisposed. But later there appeared on deck a sad feminine object, white of face, with big eyes and straggly hair that was obviously done up to be out of the way.

"You know, André," she appealed to the man beside her, "it was that lobster I ate in New Orleans. It always makes me ill."

"Oh lobster! how many sins are committed in thy name!" paraphrased the unsympathetic André.

"But I have never been seasick before," she persisted.

"My dear, la mal de mer is sister to the wind. It bloweth where it listeth and no man knows"—— chuckled André.

Oh, the small comedies on board that ship! I blessed the fairy godmother who had appeared at my christening with the gift of a sense of humor. I wished that there had been some one with me who understood—exactly. Dot possessed a sense of humor, but it was of youthful texture. Ned's sense of humor was along big, simple lines—both were elemental; they missed the subtleties.

I observed a spinster person of uncertain age and questionable charms, but yet in her eyes the beautiful light of faith—in things yet to be. She coquetted by on mincing steps, emitting little squeals of maidenly terror when the rolling of the ship upset her progress, and under her arm was the latest "best seller," upon whose blue cover in large gilt letters shone the title, "The Pursuit of Man!"

The wind blown maiden and the would-be fresh youth were in a sheltered spot, their chairs tête-à-tête. Upon her lap lay a gilt edged copy of Browning, with the flimsiest of handkerchiefs to mark the place, while she read poems from a magazine.

But now Ned hove in sight with the inevitable pipe. We strolled around to watch a game of quoits. Dot was playing with some friends she had discovered from New Orleans.

Oh, but she was a winsome thing in the joy of her seventeen summers! Her face was so appealing, like a delicate flower, but yet rich with full viewed life. And her laugh was the merriest sound on earth. It was so young, like dancing leaves. It recalled childhood's hours in a spring wood. Yet it was not a happy laugh—only merry.

She isn't grieving over the love of yesterday at all events, I thought.

That night Ned and I sat again together on deck talking over old childish days and the things that had happened since. It was restful to talk with him. When I went to the stateroom Dot was already asleep. I was startled to see tears upon her cheek. The pillow was quite wet and half peeping from beneath it was the corner of a photograph.

"So that's the way of it, little sister o' mine," I whispered. "There are laughter and jests for the world to hear, and tears and tears at night. It is a proud little Dot and deeper than we thought, and very wise."

It hurt me that I had not understood.

But when the sunlight came again Dot was the same merry, fun loving little soul. She played Ned and me a scurvy trick.

There was an old lady on board who suffered from chronic operations and unburdened her troubles upon whomsoever chanced to be within earshot.

Dot was stung first. Ned and I found her cornered in her steamer chair with the most comically tragic air on her small, quizzical face while the little old lady explained the mysterious nature of her sixteenth operation.

At sight of us Dot began tugging at her skirt, which was, apparently, caught in the chair.

"Oh, Ned!" she called. "Do help me a moment!"

But just as Ned drew near the skirt was miraculously freed.

"Oh, it's out now, thank you." She rose and, turning to the old lady, smiled sweetly.

"Dr. Withers is a physician. He would like to hear about your remarkable case, I feel sure."

The Turned Ankle.

I almost laughed aloud at sight of Ned's face, when the little wretch added, "And my sister here is a trained nurse, too. Oh, it's an awfully interesting case. I do wish I could hear more about it, but this provoking skirt of mine. I caught it in the chair, you know"—and off she sailed.

The old lady gave a continuous performance. A change of audience affected her not at all. The gong for lunch saved our lives.

Dot met us with a demure face.

"Dr. Withers, I have turned my ankle. Will you—or perhaps your assistant there"——

"Dorothy Prue," I blazed out, "if ever again you"——

But Dot burst into a merry laugh and—what was the use?

Through the long days I was with Ned almost constantly and at night we sat until late on deck. Our friendship, deep rooted in the past, had flowered into a beautiful thing that was growing very precious to me.

On the last night we were sitting together on deck as usual. I had been telling him about Mary Mayo well, my friend, what a wonderful actress she was and what a splendid nature, and all about the little apartment we had together in New York. I had given strict orders that he should love her dearly.

Then we were silent for a long time. Ned puffed at the hideous old pipe, and I watched the sea that was behaving like some well mannered person ill at ease. It bore a suave appearance on the surface, but beneath was a great restlessness. The waves rose in a solid gray black mass, threatened to break, but instead subsided sullenly. The wind, too, was fitful; only the stars seemed strangely still.

Restlessness crept into my own heart. I shivered and drew the fur collar about my throat, for the air was cold.

Ned leaned over and knocked the ashes out of his pipe and put it away. Then he drew from an inner coat pocket a leather wallet and carefully removed the broad rubber band from about it. His hands fumbled curiously.

"I have something I want to show you," he said, and his voice sounded queer.

He opened the wallet and drew something from one side of it. I leaned near to see; it was a dead rose. He shielded it carefully from the wind lest the withered leaves be blown away.

"It is the rose you gave me at the dance," he said very low.

I took it from his hands.

"Why, Ned," I gasped, "not really?"

"Really," he answered gravely. "I love you, Sally. Don't you know that there has never been any one else but you?"

He leaned toward me. "Is there a chance for me, Sally, or is there some one else?"

"No—well—that is—I mean, you see, Ned, I—I don't care for you like that, Ned—not exactly—but I do love you dearly and, oh! I want to go on being friends." I was near to tears.

There was just a moment's pause, and then Ned's dear old voice, so calm and gentle.

"Why, of course we will be friends, dear. Why not?"

He put out his hand and I buried my forehead upon it and had a nice refreshing cry.

"Oh, I say now, Sally, child, don't do that!" Ned was horribly uncomfortable, I knew.

"Just let me c-cry, Ned, please, a l-little."

When I gave him the wallet it was all wet with tears. He put it away carefully.

Then we went in. I was very miserable indeed, and dreaded the hour in the morning when we should meet. But in the morning I found that my anxiety had been useless. Ned was so matter-of-fact, so calm, so unperturbed, that I began to wonder if I had dreamed of our last night's conversation. However, I regarded him in quite a new light. There was lurking in the depths of my consciousness a feeling of proprietorship toward him that was most satisfying.

Dot was in a fever of excitement over landing, and when she finally walked down the gangplank and set foot upon New York soil she heaved a tremendous sigh and exclaimed "Thank goodness!" In such a heartfelt voice that both Ned and I stared at her.

"Well! Now that it's over, Sally, I might as well confess that I have had a very unpleasant, squeamish feeling ever since we left the mouth of the Mississippi River."

Here she winked comically at Ned and mimicked my voice ludicrously.

"But then, after all, I suppose I was just a bit—indisposed!"